


America's Role in World Affairs

an address by

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delivered before the National
Council of Young Men's Chris-
tian Associations at Detroit,
Michigan, on October 28, 1939





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An overwhelming majority of the American people today oppose our entry into war. But I predict that if the war continues and becomes violent, we will probably be drawn in. For an energetic and emotional people, conscious of their strength, are attracted into war as is the moth into the flame. There will come a time when those who would remain at peace will be made to seem cowardly and lacking in idealism. There will be social pressures and mass hysteria hard to resist. They will *not* be resisted unless now, while there is still time, men such as you here, having a leadership in your respective communities, achieve a clear intellectual conviction.

To aid in this, I suggest we look back to see the nature and origins of the present conflict, and look forward to see the way through which alone a peaceful and just world order can be achieved.

HOW VIOLENT MEN ACHIEVE MASS LEADERSHIP

Let us first look at the present controversy. Is it explicable as a struggle between the forces of good and of evil? The "devil" theory has always been pop-

ular. Thus we used to explain floods and other violent outbreaks of nature. We still thereby seek to explain the explosions of human energy. This is simple; it saves us from mental exertion and relieves us of all causal responsibility. But it is superficial and unsound.

Of course, in every community there are evil men, men who are fanatical, of overweening ambition and disposed to violence. Also, it is in such countries as Germany, Italy and Japan that men of violence are today in the ascendency. It is at this point that most people stop their analysis and draw their conclusions. I propose that we go into the matter a little more deeply.

As Alexander Hamilton pointed out in one of his Federalist papers, we must start our political thinking from the premise that in every community and at every time there will be men who are ill disposed and prone to violence. The problem is to organize society so that such men will not dominate their community and lead it into violent and destructive ways. Fortunately, most people are normally pacific and desire to live at peace with their neighbors. The few who, out of love of adventure or lust for power or predatory instincts, tend toward violence are usually a small minority. As such, they can readily be controlled. But at times great

sections of a community may come to feel that they are repressed and subjected to injustices. If so, and if they are virile and dynamic people, they then turn toward a leadership which offers, through force, to break through the restraints and to abolish the injustices. When this happens we have violent revolution. If the blame for restraint and injustice is placed upon one's own government, we have civil war. If the responsibility is attributed to other nations, then we have international war.

Now society has found political devices which measurably serve to protect it from developments of this character. We set up a sort of arbiter called "government" which has a dual mandate. On the one hand, it is expected through "police power" to repress individual and sporadic acts of violence. On the other hand, it is expected to keep this problem within controllable limits by maintaining social conditions such that there will not develop great areas where discontent is rife and a sense of injustice is acute.

Governments which are even moderately wise and reasonably impartial can maintain domestic order. Of course they do not always do so. We had in France, during the monarchy, and in Russia, under the Czars, governments which functioned for the benefit of a few

and without any sense of responsibility to the many who were subject to their power. The masses became so aroused as to follow leadership which was violent and ruthless, and which led them into bloody revolt. While these revolts were in sway, the outside communities were shocked and repelled at the horrors and cruelty which were incidents thereof. Today we recognize that the cause lay in the failure of political mechanisms to work. It was that failure which created mass discontent which, whenever it exists, gives violent, ambitious and unscrupulous men the opportunity to become formidable.

Through such experiences as the French and Russian revolutions we have learned the imperative necessity of political devices which assure equality of opportunity and which constantly are at work to prevent conditions becoming rigid and fixed to the advantage of one class and to the detriment of another.

We have failed, however, to give universal application to our political knowledge. As between national groups, there exist no political mechanisms comparable to those which serve to maintain domestic tranquillity. Each state is sovereign and in each sovereignty the power is exercised for the exclusive benefit of the national group.

For fifteen years following the World War Great Britain and France dominated Europe. They, with the United States, achieved a power so overwhelming that their political and economic policies vitally affected all other peoples of the world and largely shaped the course of their social evolution. Yet that power was exercised purely selfishly to the end of perpetuating in their own people a monopoly of advantage. We see in Japan, Italy and Germany the fruits of such a system.

WHY JAPAN, ITALY AND GERMANY ABANDONED DEMOCRACY AND ACCEPTED VIOLENT LEADERSHIP

The Japanese are a people of energy, industry and ambition. Constituting a large population, they inhabit a small area, meager in natural resources. They keenly feel the need for raw materials and for markets. But they persistently encountered a resistance predicated largely upon the white man's conception of Japanese racial inferiority. Even in China, the Japanese found their trade blocked. England had control of the principal ports and railroads, control of the currency and administration of the tariffs, so that from the standpoint of Japanese economic expansion in China

the scale was heavily weighted against her. For many years the leadership of Japan was moderate and liberal and responsive to democratic influences. Under this leadership Japan sought economic and social equality in the world. As this was denied and as the economic position in Japan became progressively more desperate, liberal leadership was ousted in favor of the army war lords who proclaimed that, by force, they would break through the restraints which the Japanese people felt had been thrown around them.

Take Italy. When the World War closed those in Paris, like myself, who had had some occasion to study the economic and financial position of Italy, could not see how Italy would find it possible to survive. Like all the belligerents, she carried heavy burdens from the war, but unlike England, France and the United States, she lacked the sources of food and raw materials apparently necessary to support her debt-ridden and impoverished population. It was, therefore, no surprise when grave social disturbances quickly occurred. Her liberal leaders were discarded and Communism and Fascism struggled for the ascendancy. Fascism won and the Italian people followed a militant leadership which offered to make Italy powerful and to force France and England to accord that share in the rich

Mediterranean area which the Italian people thought had been promised them as a reward for their participation in the war.

Take Germany. It is unnecessary here to detail the severity of the Treaty terms and their many departures from the pre-armistice agreement, in reliance on which Germany had laid down her arms. Secretary of State Lansing, on the day following the delivery of the Conditions of Peace to Germany, wrote: "Resentment and bitterness, if not desperation, are bound to be the consequences of such provisions." This forecast, shared by many at the time, was quickly realized. Yet for fifteen years following the armistice the German people followed liberal leadership under democratic institutions. But the burden continued heavy and the sense of inequality and injustice was rendered more poignant by the economic collapse of 1930. Already then the people were beginning to listen to radical leadership which offered again to make Germany strong and to break the bounds which denied her equality of opportunity. Bruening, the last and perhaps the greatest of a series of liberal German Chancellors, pleaded with England and France for Treaty changes which would alleviate the condition of the German people and prevent their falling under the radical leadership of

Hitler and the Nazi Party. His pleadings were in vain and the German people finally accepted the leadership and control of the proponents of force.

THE NEED IS FOR A CHANGED WORLD ORDER

Now I do not blame personally the rulers of England and France for what they did or what they failed to do. They were the creatures of the system of which they formed part. Neither do I condone the violence, cruelty and intolerance which characterize the present leadership of Germany, Italy and Japan. Indeed, this merits our most thorough condemnation. But, as we have seen, a system of irresponsible power always creates the mass discontents out of which evil leadership arises. When the revolt is under way those who are caught by the convulsion must resist. They are entitled to our sympathy and certainly we should not put obstacles in the way of their self-defense. But, for those not immediately involved, the vitally important issue is the realization of a new world order which will put our political knowledge to work and end a system which makes these violent revolts both inevitable and recurrent.

There are, of course, political processes which are available. The international problem is not inherently

different from that with which we have learned to deal domestically. In each case the essential is to apply this political axiom: There are always, in every country and at every time, those who are eager to lead the masses in ways of violence; they can be rendered innocuous only by preventing the many from feeling that they are subject to power which is exercised without regard for their welfare and which condemns them to inequalities and indignities.

In application of this basic principle there are two main lines of political thought. One revolves around a "league" formula and the other around a "federal" formula.

THE "LEAGUE" FORMULA

The League of Nations is, of course, the outstanding example of an attempted solution of the first type. Under the League Covenant the nations bound themselves to two essential principles. Article 19 provided for "the reconsideration by Members of the League of treaties which have become inapplicable and the consideration of international conditions whose continuance might endanger the peace of the world." Article 16 provided that if any member resorted to war without first submitting the dispute to arbitration or the coun-

cil, it would be subject to non-intercourse measures applied by the other League members. There were thus present in the League, in theory at least, the two elements indispensable to the preservation of peace. There was, first, the obligation to make changes from time to time necessary to prevent that mass discontent which always turns to dynamic leadership and makes it formidable. Second, there was provided collective power sufficient to repress violence which, so long as it is not backed by a great popular movement, is sporadic and controllable.

Actually the League failed because the dominant members of the League refused to give vitality to Article 19. "Peace" was identified with preservation of the *status quo*. "Sanctity of treaties" became the slogan and those seeking change were branded as potential aggressors against whom should be marshalled the economic and military power of the other League members. Never did the Assembly of the League move to revise treaties or to alleviate conditions which obviously threatened the peace of the world. But the underlying conception was sound.

There are, of course, many possible variations of the political formula represented by the League, notably those which call for regional leagues which bind to-

gether those states whose powers are particularly apt to be overlapping in their scope.

THE "FEDERAL" FORMULA

The second line of political approach is that represented by the federal system. The federal system recognizes that "sovereignty" is a bundle of powers which do not necessarily all have to be vested in the same entity or exercised with regard for the same group of people. Certain powers, for example those relating to trade and money, operate upon a far wider circle of persons than do those relating to sanitation, education, etc. It, therefore, vests the first set of powers in a body having responsibility toward the large group of people affected, while it leaves the second group of powers in bodies responsible only to the smaller groups of persons affected. The federal method is one for making responsibility more nearly coextensive with power.

Our own Constitution is, of course, the best known example of the federal system. But the federal principle is subject to indefinite expansion and has many possible variations. For instance, any number of states might agree that the matter of trade between them was a matter of common concern and, therefore, that au-

thority over trade between these nations should be vested in a body which derived its authority from and had responsibility toward all the peoples concerned. In this way power and responsibility tend to become co-extensive and we do away with a condition whereby certain persons are restrained and restricted by power exercised without regard for their welfare.

It might be possible, without having any discretionary federal authority, to secure agreement on trade and monetary matters so as to equalize economic opportunity and prevent the economic policies of some nations from appearing to be responsible for great areas of discontent existing elsewhere.

THE DILUTION OF SOVEREIGNTY

I have no intention here to advocate any particular political formula. I merely want to make clear that there *are* possible solutions and that there is no inherent reason why we cannot find, for the international field, political devices comparable to those which serve in the national field to prevent the mass unrest which makes quick transition to mass violence. But, and this is of the essence, *any* such formula involves some dilution of sovereignty, to the immediate disadvantage of those nations which now possess the preponderance of power.

For example, if the League had functioned, England and the United States might have been called upon to take a more benevolent attitude toward Japan's needs for markets and raw materials. It might have been felt that thereby mass discontent within Japan would have been alleviated, moderate leadership preserved and explosion into China prevented. Now any great and satisfied nation which honestly agrees, in advance, to contribute to changes deemed necessary to preserve the peace elsewhere, has deprived itself of some of the advantages of sovereignty.

Similarly, under the federal system, power is divided up as between different bodies having different jurisdictions. Power over many cannot then be exercised for the sole benefit of a single national group. Thus, the establishment of a common money might be vested in a body created by and responsible to the principal trading and investing peoples. This would deprive our own government of exclusive control over a national money. Then we could not repeat our recent experiments with revaluing gold and silver with consequent disruption of monetary relationships upon which much of the trade of the world was dependent, and with disorganization of the currencies of silver countries like China.

Any nations which go into a true league system, or into a federal system, inevitably limit the ability of their national government to use power purely selfishly. This, indeed, is the objective. Unless this end is attained, the experiment is a failure, as was the League of Nations.

Is there any great nation, our own included, which is today ready to accept a system which applies the principle that power is to be employed not for the exclusive advantage of the national group, but also to prevent others from falling into distress and revolt? If so, there is little evidence of this fact. The course of England, France and the United States over the last twenty years is wholly inconsistent with any such program. The only conception of "peace" put forward by the heads of these states has been the maintenance of the present sovereignty system, so as to perpetuate, in these few favored nations, a right to use selfishly a vast power over millions toward whom no responsibility is assumed. The English and French premiers have recently stated their war aim to be the overthrow of the present German government. But they suggest no program for preventing the recurrence of conditions which, in Germany or elsewhere, will reproduce such governments.

So I see, neither in the underlying causes of the war, nor in its long range objectives, any reason for the United States becoming a participant in the war. Were we now to act, it would be to reaffirm an international order which by its very nature is self-destructive and a breeder of violent revolt.

TRANSITION TO A NEW ORDER INEVITABLE.
WILL IT BE EFFECTED BY CATASTROPHE?

The fundamental fact is that the nationalist system of wholly independent, fully sovereign states is completing its cycle of usefulness. Already, in 1787, Hamilton had pointed out how war results from the disposition of such states "to endeavor to secure exclusive benefits for their own citizens" and, he concluded, "to look for a continuation of harmony between a number of independent, unconnected, sovereignties in the same neighborhood would be to disregard the uniform course of human events and to set at defiance the accumulated experience of ages." What he said remains peculiarly apt in relation to the twenty-five independent and unconnected states packed into Europe. But it now has broader application. For science and invention have drawn the whole world together more closely than were

our states one hundred and sixty years ago. The world has become an interconnected economic unit, managed by a series of unconnected powers. Millions upon millions of human beings today find their well-being and livelihood depend upon power elsewhere which is exercised without any responsibility toward them. Thus today, more than ever before, are the defects of the sovereignty system magnified, until now it is no longer consonant with either peace or justice. It is imperative that there be transition to a new order. This has, indeed, become inevitable; for the present system is rapidly encompassing its own destruction. The real problem is not *whether* there will be transition, but *how* can transition be made and *to what*.

There are two ways of transition. One is through catastrophe. This is the Russian program. Lenin foresaw that another general war would complete that which the World War had so well begun. He saw that it would so disrupt and sicken society as to lead to mass revolt. He believed that at this juncture the proletariat would, as was the case in Russia, turn generally to Communism and that the Union of Soviet Republics could be extended throughout the world. Therefore, the goal of Soviet policy has been world revolution through world war. Toward this the

Third International has been working assiduously and astutely. Success now seems almost within their grasp.

ORDERLY TRANSITION CAN BE EFFECTED UNDER THE PEACEFUL LEADERSHIP OF THE UNITED STATES

The other way of transition is a peaceful and gradual one, which will build upon, rather than destroy, the experience, culture, personal liberty and material comforts which the old order has given us. But for this we need peace—most of all in the United States which now almost alone combines the power, influence and intellectual capacity to lead the way. Let us not be deluded into thinking we can do this through war. If I felt that through a war we could bequeath to posterity a peaceful world order, then I would pay the present price of incalculable human suffering. But I know it is otherwise.

In the first place, we have, as yet, no adequate understanding of the problem, nor have we the wisdom to project a sound program for the future. No one has thought more profoundly on these subjects than the present British Ambassador. He has just pointed out that one reason why war has returned is that in 1919 “the democracies had not thought out what the estab-

lishment of a New World implied. They did not realize that the New World was incompatible with universal national sovereignty." I fear we still do not realize that fact. We still idealize—even deify—the national sovereignty. Understanding may come as study and debate go on through the nation as it is going on here today. But it will not come during a state of war. War does many evil things, but perhaps the worst of all is that it stops the processes of liberal thought. In our own case it would stop our thinking while it is still immature.

In the second place, even had we a program, it would be submerged by war. Our objective is some dilution of the sovereignty system. Yet war would be conducted in the name and on behalf of that system. This would be the fact, whatever we might profess.

I ask you to recall the period of 1914-1919. President Wilson, the greatest statesman of modern times, had come to perceive the defects of the existing world system. He foresaw that a lasting peace could be based only upon a dilution of sovereignty. To this end, he advocated a trusteeing of the colonial areas for the equal economic benefit of the entire world; a removal of economic barriers and an equality of trade conditions; the freedom of the seas; a league which would

maintain order, not primarily by coercion, but by leading the nations from time to time to revise treaties and change international conditions, the continuance of which jeopardized the peace of the world. He originally realized that such a program could best be achieved through a "peace without victory" and with the United States a neutral. For reasons which are still in dispute, we gave up our neutrality and became a belligerent. When the war had been won, Wilson went to Paris with the formal commitment of all the belligerents to his program. In addition he enjoyed a personal prestige throughout the world which was wholly without precedent. Nevertheless, the peace which emerged nullified his every major objective, partly because of the actual terms of the peace treaties and partly because of the manner of their administration. The fact was that nationalism had been so intensified by the war that his every effort to dilute it was in vain. He was repudiated even by his own people who relapsed into the "normalcy" of sectional selfishness. The world shortly reverted to a condition not better but worse than the world which had gone to war.

If I would not repeat that experience, it is not because I favor isolation. Nor am I unmoved by current events, which constitute an almost irresistible challenge

to action. But I know that it is senseless to exhaust ourselves in struggles which are the inevitable, the recurrent and the self-destructive by-products of the present world order. My intense desire is that the scales should fall from our eyes and that we should perceive the true way to peace. Then indeed we could act, not with violence, but with an influence which would be decisive once we have added to our power the essential ingredient of wisdom.

